

October 2015

# John M. Richardson Correspondence

John Mitchell Richardson 1893-

Hilda McLeod Jacob  
*Maine State Library*

Maine State Library

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RICHARDSON, JOHN M.

Born in Rockland, Maine, 1893

## THE COURIER-GAZETTE

ESTABLISHED 1846

Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday

ROCKLAND,

MAINE

John M. Richardson was born in Rockland in 1893, graduate of Rockland High School, Colby College 1911 and took Summer courses at Harvard. He was principal at Rockport, Maine, High School and sub principal of Rockland, being president of the local and County Teachers Associations. He is now business manager of The Rockland Courier-Gazette and was president of the Maine Press Association 1939-41. He is married, with one son, Gordon, member of the class of '42, Colby College.

During his vacations and for a year following college, Mr. Richardson served the Penobscot Bay steamers in various capacities, adding to an already strong love of steam craft and the sea. Outside of this, his lifelong hobby, his hobby has been civic and social service organizations, a score of which he has headed in the past quarter-century.





March 30, 1942

Mr. John M. Richardson  
15 Granite Street  
Rockland, Maine

Dear Mr. Richardson:

Of course STEAMBOAT LORE OF THE PENOBSCOT is in the State Library; and a most interesting and valuable addition it is. The people of the state are fortunate in having such a record of these steamboats.

Perhaps you know of the Maine Author Collection: an exhibit of about a thousand volumes, written by Maine people, inscribed and presented to the Collection for permanent display. We also gather all available data on the authors: biographical, critical, photographic; and we preserve correspondence. It is the one place, we believe, where all the works of all the authors of the state are represented; and with each new volume, and each year, the collection increases its value.

One of the most fascinating details is to be found in the book inscriptions. Many write tributes to Maine, some tell of the instance that started the writing of the book, others add a paragraph explaining an interesting or amusing episode connected with the writing.

We hope you will want to inscribe a copy of STEAMBOAT LORE OF THE PENOBSCOT for this collection. It would be a distinctive addition, and one for which we would be exceedingly grateful.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY  
BY

hmf

SECRETARY

JOHN M. RICHARDSON  
ROCKLAND, MAINE

March 31, 1942

Maine State Library  
Hilda McLeod Jacob, Secretary  
Augusta, Maine

Dear Mrs. Jacob:

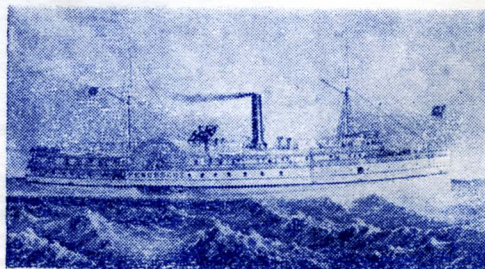
I had heard only remotely of the Maine Author Collection prior to your letter of March 30, and I am frankly delighted with the invitation to be of the group.

A copy of "Steamboat Lore", inscribed as you suggest, will be in the mail shortly. Anything further you desire will be promptly forthcoming.

Sincerely,

*John M. Richardson*  
John M. Richardson

JMR/k



April 1, 1942

Mr. John M. Richardson  
15 Granite Street  
Rockland, Maine

Dear Mr. Richardson:

The enclosed stamp will refund the postage for STEAMBOAT LORE OF THE PENOBSCOT, but it will scarcely repay you for your generosity. The inscribed copy of your book, for the Maine Author Collection, arrived this morning, and we are delighted.

Thank you very much for the inscription, which is especially interesting -- nostalgic, too, to those of us who knew the Belfast. With her last sailing, as historians will doubtless chronicle, "a way of life ended." But how fortunate we are to have your record of that life and those ships that made it!

Please accept our appreciative thanks, and a very cordial invitation to visit the Collection when you are in Augusta.

The enclosed envelope is for your convenience. We seem to lack biographical data, and we do not find it in print. Perhaps some time you will write a few paragraphs for our files?

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY  
BY

hmj  
Encls--2

SECRETARY



# THE COURIER-GAZETTE

ESTABLISHED 1846

Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday

ROCKLAND, MAINE

April 4, 1942

Maine State Library  
Mrs. Hilda McLeod Jacob, Sec.,  
Augusta, Maine

Dear Mrs. Jacob:

Thank you for your fine letter of April 1.  
A few notes are enclosed, as you suggested, along with  
the photograph.

People have expressed to me the idea that there  
was a great amount of bone labor in "Steamboat Lore".  
Rather shamefully <sup>needed</sup> I admit to you that the reverse is true,  
for I was driving on the high road of happiness all the  
way, with never a flat tire or a rough stretch of road.  
The "Kay" of this letter did all the real work.

Would there be a proper place for a couple of  
rather exceptional steamboat pictures in the files?  
I have reference to "Portland" and "Rangeley".

Yours very truly,

*John M. Richardson*

John M. Richardson

JMR/k  
(Enc. 2)

*Am enclosing a couple of  
survivors that were pleasant  
surprises*



April 9, 1942

Mr. John M. Richardson  
15 Granite Street  
Rockland, Maine

Dear Mr. Richardson:

Thank you very much for sending exactly the information we needed for our files; and especially for sending the photograph.

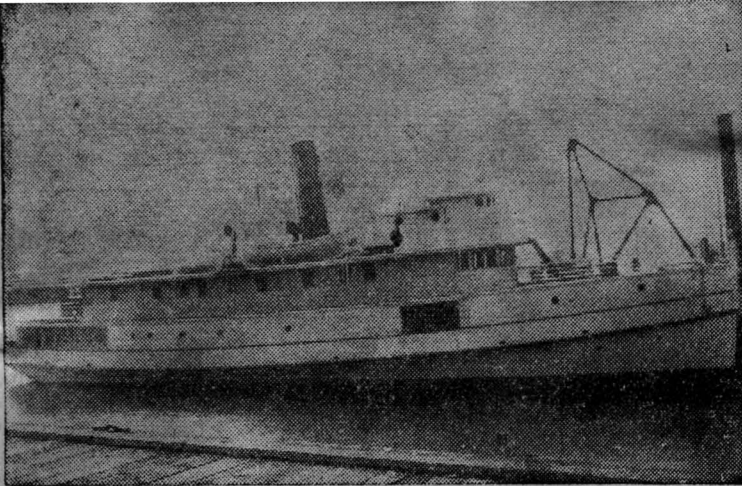
You are kind to offer the two pictures of the "Portland" and the "Rangeley." We would be extremely glad to have them, unless they are of unusual size. We have only ordinary-sized files; but if the pictures are not exceptionally large, we shall be able to take care of them, and would indeed consider ourselves fortunate in the gift.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY  
BY

hmj

SECRETARY



The Monhegan, one of many dead-and-gone craft which steam through the pages of *Steamboat Lore of the Penobscot*, by John M. Richardson.

IF THE new year produces any more interesting Maine non-fiction than John M. Richardson's book *Steamboat Lore of the Penobscot*, it will be lavishly generous to the old Pine Tree State. But it won't be more generous than Mr. Richardson, of Rockland, has been in his presentation of pictures and data of the steamers which have operated in and out and around the waters of Penobscot Bay since the 1850's and even earlier.

Perhaps he has missed much that would have been highly interesting; as Ben Ames Williams says in his foreword to the book, "No one could hope to make such a collection complete"; but whether he has or has not, there are some 130 photographs of roughly 100 different vessels in his book, and there are life histories of most of those vessels, and that adds up to a fine cargo of reading pleasure.

The big Boston-Bangor boats are there—from the first, Bangor I (1834) which ended her days in the Turkish navy, to the crack Camden and Belfast, which wrote finis to the service in 1935; not missing Katahdin (1863-93)—"loved with an abiding affection that remains in Maine's folklore today"—nor the City of Bangor, money-maker of the 90's and first to wear a concealed walking-beam.

A charming variety of smaller craft, City of Richmond (1865-1907) to Monhegan (1903-1938), the latter a victim of the hurricane at Providence, make their bows in the section on Portland-Rockland steamers. A still more interesting collection appears in the discussion of Bar Harbor and Bluehill lines, among them the Henry Morrison (1854-1897); the J. T. Morse (1904-1941); the Mount Desert (1879-1914); and the ancient Rockland I, comical-looking, but renowned Civil War veteran.

The beautiful Maine Central Railroad fleet is described in another section. Sidney L. Winslow of Vinalhaven contributes an amusing account of the Rockland-to-Vinalhaven competition of the Gov. Bodwell (1892-1931) and "the people's little boat," the Vinal Haven (1892-1938). Tugs, river craft, lighthouse tenders and miscellaneous craft, including the concrete steamship Pollas which ended her days on Old Cilley Ledge, Port Clyde, in the 20's, have their place in Mr. Richardson's story. And concluding it is a thrillingly vivid account of the Portland disaster Nov. 26-7, 1898, written by Dr. Thomas H. Eames.

## *Boston Sunday Post Dec. 28, 1941* **Maine's Vanished Steamers Once Again Plow the Ocean**

**"STEAMBOAT LORE OF THE  
PENOBSCOT"**

By John M. Richardson: *Kennebec Journal Print Shop. \$3.50*

BY FRED C. GREEN

Now and then a work appears in the bookstalls that takes its readers on a nostalgic journey down Memory Lane. In that category is Mr. Richardson's compendium of fact, picture and anecdote which unfolds the history of steamboats that plied the waters of Penobscot Bay and its approaches, and that sailed in and out of the harbor of his native city, Rockland.

Where once they were numerous, now but a single boat remains, and the author has performed a service in compiling their records before the sources of information passed, even as the craft themselves have disappeared from the scene.

His book will interest the thousands who have sojourned on the Maine coast, or who, in the past, have sailed out of Boston for Portland, the Kennebec trip or the run to Bangor, and particularly the last-named. It will bring back the sail past the Boston Harbor islands in fading daylight, the tall twin lights on Thatcher Island, from where the steamer headed in a bee line for grim Monhegan Island, and, as daylight broke, the turn past Owl's Head and the Breakwater into Rockland harbor, with the misty Camden Mountains looming to starboard.

In less poetical vein it will also recall the threats—yes, and curses—of late risers disturbed by the clatter and din of unloading freight at an unholy hour. And as the "Boston boat" left the wharf to resume her voyage up the winding Penobscot, a fleet of smaller steamers wallowed and rolled ahead of her, like a scattering flock of duck-

lings, bound for various island ports, to converge again as twilight fell, with passengers and packages for transfer to the west-bound mother ship.

Those vessels, large and small, carried their passengers through some of the most magnificent scenery in the world. The names of certain units of the fleet became bywords and some of them made history that is recorded in tales of shipwreck and storm and peril, larded with personal heroism and fine seamanship.

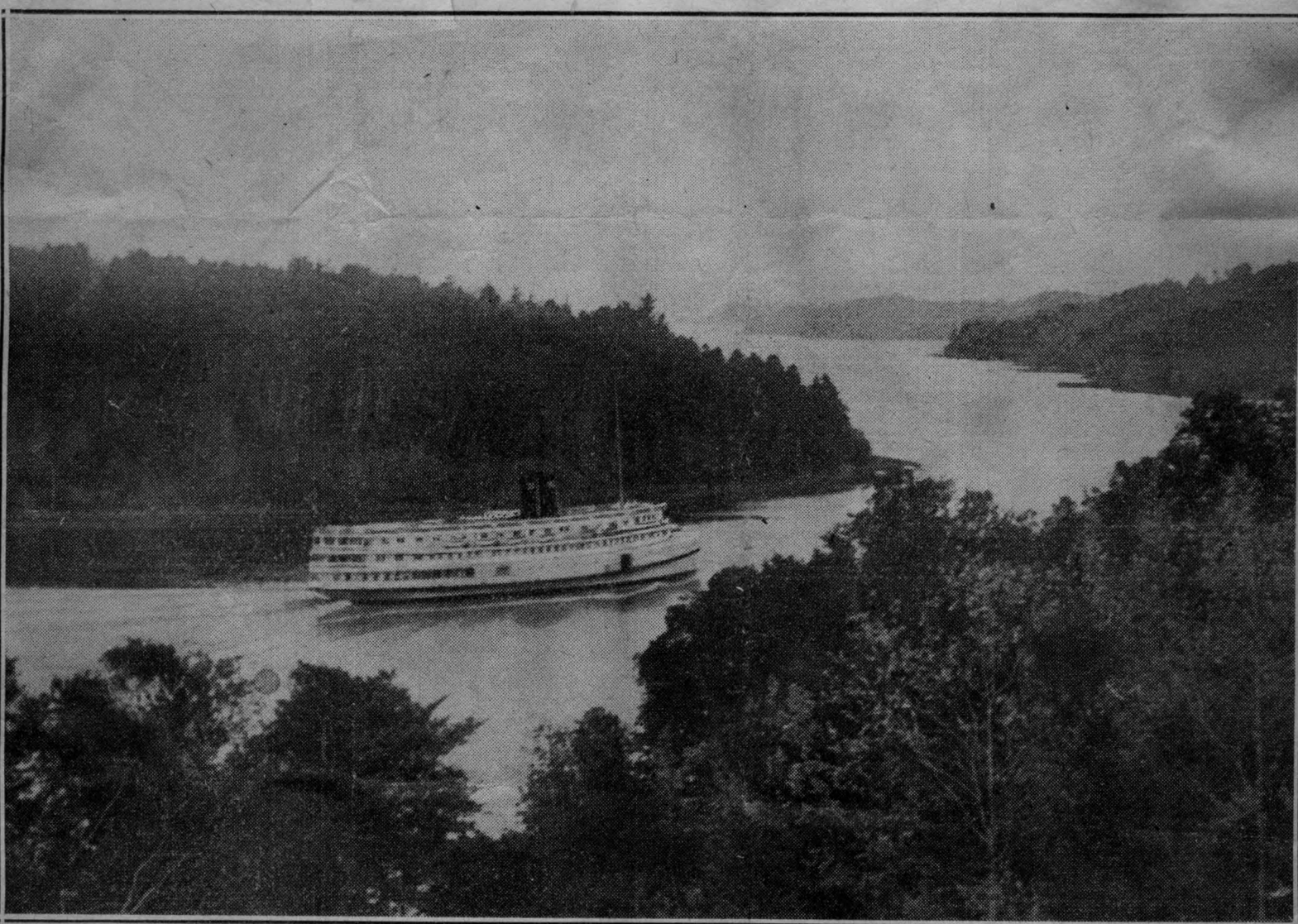
For years the owners of the steamboats reaped the profits of a bonanza. Then, as personal transportation, exemplified by the motor car, began to grow more popular and highways became better, the glory of steamboats began to fade, along with their revenues. One after another the lines retired from business and six years ago the Boston-Bangor service was discontinued after more than a century of uninterrupted sailings.

Some of the boats are still in use at places distant from the Pine Tree State. The bones of others lie on reefs or rest on the bottoms of secluded harbors. The majority of the dauntless men who sailed the great Maine fleet are sleeping in quiet spots near little white churches that dot river banks and harborsides in a hundred Maine communities.

Once busy wharves are crumbling, while the tides chuckle and gurggle around the slimy piling as though gossiping about the glorious past that is set before us in "Steamboat Lore."

It, by the way, is the brain child of a man who has lived in an environment of steamboats, who has filled his book with pictures of the old craft and who takes pardonable pride in the foreword by Ben Ames Williams.





Steamboat Round the Bend. S. S. Camden, bound for Boston, through the Bucksport Narrows. Photograph by Alton Blackington.)

March 12, 1945

Mr. John M. Richardson  
15 Granite Street  
Rockland, Maine

Dear Mr. Richardson:

The third edition of your fine book, STEAMBOAT LORE OF THE PENOBSCOT, has, we read, new material in its pages, including several new pictures. We are therefore adding it immediately to our order list, which will go out to some book dealer.

You probably remember that you very generously made it possible for the Maine Author Collection to add an inscribed copy of this book to the exhibit shelves three years ago. Since there is so much additional material in the new edition, we wonder if you would not like to have it in the collection.

We should consider it a distinguished addition and a book well worth permanent preservation. Our good wishes go to you for its success.

Sincerely yours

hmj

Secretary



FRANK A. WINSLOW, Editor

MRS. W. O. FULLER, Associate Editor

JOHN M. RICHARDSON, Business Manager

# THE COURIER-GAZETTE

ESTABLISHED 1846

Tuesday-Friday

ROCKLAND, MAINE

March 14, 1945.

Mrs. F. W. Jacob, Secretary  
Maine State Library  
Augusta, Maine

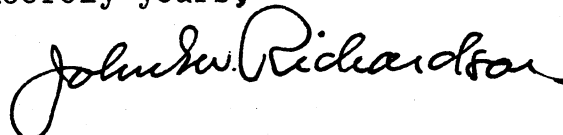
Dear Mrs. Jacob:

Just what manner of man could say "No" to a letter such as reached my desk from your office today? Seriously, a copy of the third edition of "Steamboat Lore" is enroute to your Maine Author Collection.

In answer to a rather general request from schools and libraries, a complete index has been added and a listing of steamers as they appear in "Steamboat Lore" and by other names. A number of new boats and new and replacement pictures are included.

Thank you again for your pleasant letter.

Sincerely yours,



John M. Richardson

JMR/k

March 15, 1945

Mr. John M. Richardson  
15 Granite Street  
Rockland, Maine

Dear Mr. Richardson:

The autographed copy of the third edition of STEAMBOAT LORE OF THE PENOBSCOT, for the Maine Author Collection, came this morning; and once again we express appreciation of your generous interest.

The addition of an index increases immeasurably the reference value of the book. This title may not appear on New York's best-seller lists, but it must be constantly in demand in our state, and especially in coastal towns. It fills a long-felt need, and has been done with care and affection. It is full of nostalgic memories for many, but it is also of tremendous reference value in a library. Students of Maine's maritime history owe you a profound debt of gratitude for this work.

Thank you for presenting a copy of the third edition to the Maine Author Collection. We hope you will call whenever you may be in Augusta, and see the exhibit.

Sincerely yours

hmj  
Encl--6¢ postal refund

Secretary



# J. M. Richardson, Noted State Publisher, Dead At 66

ROCKLAND, March 20—John Mitchell Richardson, 66, editor and publisher of "The Courier Gazette" and noted steamboat historian, died of a heart attack Friday afternoon, as he entered the Thorndike Hotel to attend a Rotary Club meeting.

He had been ill for some time but had been at his desk in recent weeks.

Mr. Richardson, a Maine native, had lived in Rockland most of his life where he was born January 26, 1893, the son of Abbott and May (Baldwin) Richardson.

## Colby Graduate

He was graduated from Rockland High School in 1911 and Colby College in 1916, and did graduate work at Harvard.

He was president of the Maine Press Association for two terms and was a charter member of the New England Weekly Press Association. He was also a member of the National Editorial Association.

A member of the Steamboat Historical Society, Mr. Richardson was known as an authority on Maine coastal steamboats and was author of the book, "Steamboat Lore of the Penobscot."

He joined The Courier staff in 1924 as advertising manager, later became general manager, and had been sole owner and publisher since December 3, 1948.

With The Courier Mr. Richardson was noted for his timely and sometimes controversial editorials. He also wrote a weekly column, "Steamboat Yarns of Ships and Men."

Under Mr. Richardson the 115-year-old newspaper, which publishes three times a week, initiated a special school section and was noted for its backing of worthwhile civic projects.

The publisher of the coastal



JOHN M. RICHARDSON

weekly wielded considerable influence on politics in Maine.

In 1954 the Republican editor supported the victorious Democratic candidate for governor, Edmund S. Muskie, who is now a United States Senator.

But in 1956 he supported the entire GOP slate and wrote a letter to President Eisenhower, receiving an answer, which he featured in his columns, that the President needed a Republican Congress and wanted Maine voters to "work for a complete Re-

(Continued on Page 2, Col. 2)

# Publisher Dead At 66

(Continued from Page 1)

publican victory" in their state.

Before joining The Courier, Mr. Richardson was principal of Rockport High School. When he first gained employment at The Courier he was submaster of Rockland High School. He later retained his interest in education and served as a member of the Rockland School Board, becoming chairman of the first school board under the city's new charter in 1946. He was also at one time a member of the Maine Port Authority.

Surviving are his widow, Mrs. Mildred (Simmons) Richardson; a son, Gordon A. Richardson of Stonington; two granddaughters, Betsy and Sally Richardson of Stonington; and a nephew, Lawrence Richardson of Rockland.

Funeral services will be held Monday afternoon at 2 o'clock from St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Rockland, with the Rev. Canon E. O. Kenyon officiating.

Interment will be in Achorn Cemetery, Rockland.